The design and implementation of a holistic training model for language teacher education in a cyber face-to-face learning environment

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Developing, implementing and evaluating a holistic training model for language teacher education in a cyber face-to-face learning environment

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1. Introduction
The growing momentum of online teaching brings with it a sense of urgency, especially with regard to the need to develop and evaluate a holistic e-teacher education pedagogy that caters for both professional development and personal growth and identity formation of a new generation of e-teachers. Such a need has been keenly felt by language professionals who work in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (see Hubbard & Levy, 2006; Hubbard, 2009), because, as pointed out by Hampel and Stickler (2005: 312), “online teachers need different skills than those normally employed by tutors trained to teach languages in a face-to-face classroom and they also require different skills compared to online teachers of other subjects”.

The professional and personal development of an e-teacher is a challenging process, and this fact is exacerbated by the complexity and synchronicity of e-teacher training in a cyber face-to-face environment. Such an environment is often supported by a Synchronous Learning Management System (SLMS) which “employs a combination of synchronous and asynchronous technologies such as audio, video and other data sharing and interaction tools (e.g., an interactive whiteboard, document sharing, desktop sharing and multimedia discussion forums) to provide an integrated learning environment where multimodal interaction with both human and materials can be facilitated” (Chen & Wang, 2008: 97). To manage such interaction effectively requires not only technology know-how, but a holistic online pedagogy addressing the complex and evolving nature of the cyber face-to-face learning. Its spontaneity and high technical sophistication place special demands on language teachers new to synchronous online learning.

More important than skill and knowledge development is the personal development of a teacher. The influence of affective factors, such as attitudes, motivation and anxiety, on the success of learning has long been recognized (e.g., Freeman, 1989). Mitchell and Myles (2004: 26) contend that “social psychologists have long been interested in the idea that the attitudes of the learner towards the target language, its speakers and the learning context, may all play some part in explaining success or lack of it”. These affective factors have become a collective indicator of the learner’s
readiness to enter into a certain learning discourse (see MacIntyre et al., 1998; Dörnyei & Skehan, 2002). The impact of affective factors such as self doubt, anxiety and uncertainty is even more keenly felt in a teacher’s journey to become an online or e-teacher, especially when new e-teachers need to manage a multimodal environment such as a cyber face-to-face classroom. Therefore, a pedagogical approach that embraces the whole teacher is urgently needed for teacher education in such learning environments.

We use the term holistic to emphasize the need to always introduce specific skills within the total learning context, and to practice these skills in an authentic learning and teaching environment. Such a perspective makes clear that a multimodal learning environment is a system where all the elements combine and interact in a real learning context. At the same time, a holistic approach also means that the model we develop goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills to also cater for the personal growth of trainees so they may become confident as well as competent e-teachers. It is also crucial that the process of such a pedagogical development be evaluated in a timely fashion in order to gain a deeper understanding of the nuances of e-teacher training. This leads us precisely to the aim of this study, which is to explore the essential process of how such a model could be developed, implemented and evaluated.

The remainder of the article will first discuss the contents of and rationale underpinning each key component of the model we developed in an e-teacher training program, and then moves on to the crux of the article – the implementation and evaluation of this model in a cyber face-to-face environment supported by an advanced SLMS called Collaborative Cyber Community (hereafter 3C)\(^1\). The purpose of this evaluation was to illustrate how this model worked in our case and in what ways the trainees perceived the effectiveness of this model.

2. The proposed PRC training model and its underpinning rationale

Informed by teacher education theories and online teacher training practices, we developed an e-teacher training model called the Practice, Reflection and Collaboration (PRC) model. PRC represents the three fundamental components of the model, which cater for the professional and personal developments of the trainee teachers in a holistic manner. What underlined the model was the incorporation of an evaluation element in each stage and component of the training program, in various forms. These evaluation mechanisms, realized mainly through reflection and collaboration, enabled us to gain insights into the intricacy of the learning processes of the trainee teachers. These insights, in turn, informed our evaluation and improvements of the proposed model. The following section will discuss the three major components of the model, namely, practice, reflection and collaboration, in terms of their contents and the rationale underpinning each component, drawing on theories and practices in teacher education. In so doing, it will reveal how a holistic approach and an evaluative dimension were built into every part of the model.

2.1 The practice component

We believe that catering for the professional developments of the trainee in an authentic learning and teaching context should be an important attribute of a holistic e-teacher training model. The holistic approach we adopted led us to a two-stage design in our model, with skill and knowledge

\(^1\) 3C was funded by the Taiwan National Science Council and has been constantly upgraded by the National Sun Yat-sen University in Taiwan. In terms of scalability, the server running 3C has a capacity to support up to 500 online asynchronous users and 200 online synchronous users.
transmission, i.e., platform training, in Stage One and practice teaching in a real online teaching context in Stage Two. Platform training is a necessity, but in our model it was designed such that it only occupied one third of the total length of the training program, and it was immediately followed by eight weeks of online teaching practice, the longest period in the training program. When deciding upon the two-stage design and the length for each stage, we were particularly influenced by Korthagen’s (2001: 71) three principles for building professional learning:

1. A teacher’s professional learning will be more effective when directed by an internal need in the learner.
2. A teacher’s professional learning will be more effective when rooted in the learner’s own experiences.
3. A teacher’s professional learning will be more effective when the learner reflects in detail on his or her experiences.

Loughran (2006: 136) comments on the importance of these principles by saying that they emphasise that “professional learning is not developed through simply gaining more knowledge, rather professional learning is enhanced by one becoming more perceptive to the complexities, possibilities and nuances of teaching contexts”. Such a perception can only be gained through teaching experiences in which students of teaching will develop “awareness of situations” which is a “knowledge building exercise of a type based in phronesis and shared as episteme”. According to Korthagen et al. (2001), episteme is propositional or abstract knowledge that can be applied to many different situations, while phronesis is derived through understanding specific situations. Loughran (2006: 135) also advocates the relationship of “phronesis informing episteme informing phronesis”. In other words, a holistic e-teacher training model should cater for the development of skills and knowledge in an authentic learning context. The importance of bridging the gap between theory and practice and achieving an appropriate balance between the two has not only been recognized in teacher education in general but also supported by evidence from some online teacher training practices. For example, results from Bennett and Marsh’s (2002: 18) study show that “in any training program for online tutoring, the prospective online tutors should be placed within the practical context as early as possible and the evidence suggests that online teaching practice may be the single most important element of the training and development process.” In addition to the above discussed importance of practice, another rationale underpinning our decision of a two-stage design was our belief that practice itself was a form of evaluation of theory. Thus in this study, practice teaching in Stage Two was designed to test, in an authentic teaching context, how successful our platform training was in Stage One.

2.2 The reflection component

The second attribute of a holistic e-teacher training model should be its built-in mechanisms to nurture the professional and personal developments of the trainee. One of such mechanisms in the proposed training model was reflection. Reflection was adopted for two main purposes: to function as a key feedback mechanism in the evaluation of the model, and as an essential supportive measure for the trainees' personal growth and professional development. Regular and continuous reflection was supported and encouraged at all stages of the training program, although it was implemented in different ways in different stages of the training, through various interactions between the trainees and the trainer, and between the trainees themselves.

Reflection has been widely recognised as a central tenet in an effective teacher education program (Bennett & Marsh, 2002; Connolly, Jones, & Jones, 2007; Stickler & Hampel, 2007). In fact, the term 'reflective practice' has long been a catch phrase in teacher education, and it can be traced back to the works of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1948), Piaget (1964) and Schön (1983). Central to their work is the concept of integration of experience with reflection and of theory with practice. To Loughran
and Northfield (1998: 15), “reflection is a personal process of thinking, refining, reframing and developing actions”. To others (e.g., Day, 1993 and Freeman, 1982), reflection should also be a collective effort (also see discussion in section 3.3).

When determining the ways that reflection should be built into our training model, we were particularly inspired by what Schön (1983) calls the cycle of appreciation, action and re-appreciation, and by Wallace’s (1991: 56) concept of ‘reflective cycle’, which involves cycles of practice and reflection (see Figure 1). These theories led to our adoption of a cyclic approach of practice, reflection and professional competence. In our study, each of the eight trainee teachers went through four of such cycles though conducting four rounds of online teaching practice and immediate reflection on each round. Within each cycle, each trainee would complete a self-reflection report and receive one monitoring report from each of their peers and the trainer (also see Levy, Wang & Chen, 2009).

== Figure 1 is about here ==

Observation is another form of reflection and evaluation that was designed into our training model. During online teaching practice, all trainees were asked to observe their peers’ teaching and complete a monitoring report for each teacher. When discussing the importance of observing teaching, Maingay (1988: 121) points out that the observer will be able to pick up new ideas and reflect on their own teaching through watching someone else. Lewis (2006:593) also confirms that the observation of his teaching by a ‘critical friend’ was “[b]y far the most productive of the strategies” used for his professional development in online teaching.

As a way of sharing their reflection, we also encouraged the trainees to post their reflection in the Discussion Forum in 3C throughout the training process. Different from the self-reflection and monitoring reports, postings in the Discussion Forum usually focused on meta-discourse of online teaching and training on a more theoretical level. Akbaris (2007: 204) argues for the importance of this type of discussion by saying that “reflective practice, if it excludes theoretical discussions, will limit teacher development to matters of techniques and procedures, blocking any attempt to gain higher recognition and status in the discourse community”. The Discussion Forum thus met the need for new understanding and knowledge of online teaching and training to be communicated to their peers and for learning to move beyond the individual realm, thus creating the possibility of “professional dialogue, critique and inquiry” (Loughran, 2007: 142).

2.3 The collaboration component

Collaborative learning constituted another built-in mechanism in our holistic training model for fostering the professional and personal growth of the trainee teachers. Collaboration was built into the model not only because of the indispensible role it played in the trainees’ professional and personal development, but also because it served as a means of evaluating the model in a collective way as the trainee teachers reflected together and learned from one another. Similar to reflection, collaboration among the trainee teachers came in different forms at different stages in the training process.

Day (1993:86) argues that “[i]n order to move to levels of confrontation and ethical justification, reflection will need to be analytic and involve dialogues with others”. The social nature of reflection means reflection is not only an individual process, it should, as suggested by Freeman (1982), also involve group interactions wherever possible. When designing the collaborative learning component of our training program, we found Loughran’s (2006: 139) discussion on a comment made by Bulfin (2003) very useful. When discussing his experience as a beginning teacher, Bulfin (2003: 33) points
out that the “process of attempting to make our joint knowledge increasingly public, helped lay to
rest some of the self-doubt and uncertainty that surrounded our discussions and sense of professional
identity as valued members of a knowledge community.” In view of the involving nature and high
tech content of an online learning environment, especially a cyber face-to-face environment, it is
reasonable to assume that “self-doubt” and “uncertainty” can be less acutely felt, with a supportive
learning community, a necessity for teachers new to such an environment. Thus our training program
was designed with the aim of establishing a “collaborative culture” characterized by “collegiality,
contract-making, entitlements and critical friendships built through openness and trust which support
rather than erode teacher research and which encourage staff to share problems and respond to new
demands” (Day, 1993: 89).

One of our efforts to achieve this aim was the inclusion of team teaching in our training process. In
the last four weeks of the online teaching practice, trainees were randomly paired to co-teach online
for a 30 minute session per team in the first two weeks and they were placed in a different pairing in
the last two weeks to conduct another 30 minute session per team. The rationale for changing the pair
partners was to ensure that they had opportunities to collaborate and reflect with different trainee
teachers to maximize learning. The new partner would provide them with another, different
perspective on teaching and learning drawing on different ideas and experience. A two-hour
workshop was held prior to the start of team teaching, in Week 5 of Stage Two, for reflecting upon
and sharing online teaching experience and for introducing more online pedagogies, especially team
teaching strategies. The rationale for having a workshop in between the teaching practice was that
the trainees by then would have gained enough experience with online teaching to enable them to
evaluate these strategies and their experiences in more depth.

Another form of collective evaluation and collaboration built into our training program was online
teaching observation and peer monitoring. When an individual trainee or team was teaching, all the
other trainees and the trainer were required to observe and complete a monitoring report for each
trainee who taught. The report would then be emailed immediately after each lesson to the
trainee/team observed. In order to facilitate professional dialogues, the monitoring report was
designed to have a column called “Your say”, inviting the receiver of the monitoring report to
respond to comments made by the observing teachers. This process allowed the trainees to reflect
together as new ideas and practices emerged from their first hand experience.

We also utilized the Discussion Forum in 3C to support collaborative learning among the trainees.
component for any programme of staff development and training for prospective online tutors”. The
term “clinical supervision” has been employed by scholars to refer to “the facilitation of dialogues
around what goes on in the teaching and learning situation”, and this dialogue “enables theory to
emerge out of practice, rather than exclusively being applied to practice as is so often the case”
(Bennett & Marsh, 2002: 19). Following this recommendation, we used and encouraged the trainees
to use the Discussion Forum in 3C as a supportive and collaborative venue to share and evaluate
ideas and reflections in a timely fashion.

3. Methodology

3.1 The SLMS used in this study – 3C
3C was used as the training platform for our e-teaching program which evaluated the proposed
training model between November 2006 and February 2007. 3C has both asynchronous and
synchronous modes. In the asynchronous mode, audio, video and text-based learning resources (e.g.,
discussion forums, lecture notes, web-based course materials, assignments and video recordings of
cyber face-to-face classes) can be accessed by the learner at anytime. However, this study focuses on
teacher training in the synchronous mode which consists of a main cyber face-to-face classroom and
group cyber face-to-face classrooms. The group cyber classrooms, dedicated to supporting students
working in groups, offer the same functionalities as does the main classroom. Figure 2 is a screen
capture of the main cyber classroom, which features five major windows: the main audio and video,
the control panel, the text chat box, the whiteboard and the sub-video windows. Up to 18 sub video
windows can be displayed at the same time (see Wang & Chen, 2009, for further discussions on 3C.).
The aim of our training program was to train the trainee teachers in managing the cyber classroom
for synchronous online language teaching. This is also why most of the training was conducted in the
cyber classroom in order for the trainees to experience the learning environment as both a teacher
and student.
3.2 Participants
3.2.1 Chinese language teachers
Eight experienced Chinese language teachers from three universities in Queensland, Australia participated in the evaluation of the proposed model. Seven of them were Chinese native speakers and one a native English speaker. Data from the pre surveys indicates that two of them had either briefly taught or attended online classes before but the rest did not have any online teaching and learning experience. It was also shown in the pre survey data that four of them self-rated their computer competence to be 3 out of 5, with 5 being high, three chose 4 and only one chose 2. Apart from the first physical face-to-face workshop, the participants attended the training solely online either from home or their offices. Pseudonyms were used for all participants in this study to protect privacy.

3.2.2 Distance Chinese language students
In Stage Two, when online practice teaching started, participation was also called among students who were studying intermediate Chinese through the Open Learning Program at Griffith University, Australia. Only five students volunteered due to the small enrolment in the program and the non-compulsory nature of the participation. They attended the online classes from various parts of Australia, with one from China.

3.3 Data and data collection methods
What characterized our training model was the seamless incorporation of evaluation at various stages throughout the training program. Essentially, we adopted a formative evaluation approach to the evaluation of the proposed training model. Palloff & Pratt (1999) define formative evaluation as follows:

Formative evaluation is an ongoing process that can occur at any point throughout the course; it can surface gaps in course material or in learners’ ability to grasp that material. Formative evaluation gives instructors a way to shift focus if the course is not proceeding according to plan. (p. 144).

Translated into the evaluation design and data collection in this research, formative evaluation was realized mainly through participants’ reflection and collaboration at various points in their training. Our holistic, reflective and cyclic approach to training and the collaborative nature of the proposed training model enabled us to employ a combination of data collection methods to effectively evaluate the training model. As evaluation is an integral part of the proposed training model, a wealth of data has been collected as shown in Table 1. These methods and data not only documented the trainees’ learning experience, but also served as a way of nurturing the trainees’ professional and personal growth and identity formation as our training model required the participants to constantly evaluate their learning through various forms of interaction.

3.4 Data analysis
Our holistic approach to training and the nature of formative evaluation determined the adoption of a qualitative methodology to analyse the data contained in Table 1. As defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998: 10), qualitative research refers to “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification”, and can be used to “obtain the intricate
details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods”. Thus, when evaluating each component, we will first describe the contents of the component, and then present and discuss data such as excerpts from the Discussion Forum and data from the surveys. In addition, completed monitoring and self-reflection reports will be discussed to further illustrate the holistic characteristics of our training model and the learning process of the participants.

4. Results and discussion

This section further evaluates the three components of our training model, namely, the two-stage practice design, the reflective and cyclic design, and the collaborative learning design. Empirical data from our training program will be presented and discussed in relation to each of these components.

4.1 The practice component

As shown in Table 2, the proposed training model featured a two-stage training program with four weeks in Stage One, platform training, and Eight weeks in Stage Two, practice teaching. Stage One essentially consisted of a 2-hour workshop each week for three weeks and one week for self-reflection and preparation for Stage Two. The training focuses on skill development relating to cyber-face-to-face classroom management, especially the use of the functions in the classroom to support synchronously interactive language learning. The holistic approach we employed in the training ensured that discrete teaching of specific skills taken out of context be kept to a minimum. This might occur occasionally but generally speaking the thrust of the model was always to introduce and certainly to practice new skills and knowledge in a realistic, authentic context.

The first workshop was face-to-face, conducted in a language laboratory at Griffith University, in Australia, and the other two workshops were conducted completely online in the cyber face-to-face classroom in 3C. Seven teachers and the trainer attended the workshops from their homes or offices. The aims of these workshops were to discuss online teaching strategies and introduce the use of the major functions in 3C for synchronous online language teaching. These functions included the whiteboard functions (e.g., the pen functions, the eraser, the pointer etc), file uploading to the whiteboard, join web browsing, desktop sharing, window capturing and the poll function, among others.

In this stage, possible technical problems that the trainees might encounter in their teaching were also pointed out, such as voice echoes and difficulty in accessing the 3C synchronous cyber classroom, caused by pop-up window being blocked. The rationale for discussing the problems in this early stage was to prepare the trainees more fully for the occurrence of technical problems in their practice teaching. The three workshops were then followed by a week of self-reflection and practice. This week was also utilized by the trainees for preparation for Stage Two – online teaching practice with language learners.

Stage Two comprised eight weeks of online teaching with distance students of Chinese, and one ongoing training workshop. The first four weeks were designated to individual teaching, and a cyclic approach was adopted in that each trainee was required to teach a 15 minute session individually in the first two weeks and another 15 minute session in the second half of individual teaching. The same approach was also applied to team teaching in the last four weeks of Stage Two.

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2 One teacher was not available for workshop 2 and 3 but returned for the rest of the training program
QI-1 in the final survey (see Appendix A) conducted at the completion of the training program asks the trainees to rate on a 5 point Likert scale the appropriate length of the training program with 1 being too short and 5 too long. The responses averaged at 2.75, leaning towards the short side, as 3 indicates the appropriate length. As the participant numbers were very small, the results can only provide an indication of trends. The average for answers to QI-2 about the appropriate amount of contents that should be covered in the program reaches 3, with 1 being too little and 5 too much. Thus the amount of contents covered in the training was considered appropriate. Table 3 summarizes the replies to QI-3 asking the trainees about the training schedule they would prefer.

As demonstrated in Table 3, half of the participants (50%) chose “4 weeks of training and 7 weeks of practice teaching”. This indicates that more trainees preferred a little more training and a slightly shorter practice teaching period than the schedule used in this study, i.e., 3 weeks of training and 8 weeks of practice teaching. The synchronous nature and the provision of versatile functions of the online platform may contribute to this preference. Despite this slight difference, the validity of our two-stage practice design with a longer period for practice teaching and shorter period of platform training was confirmed by the trainees.

The practice component of our model provided the trainees with ample practice to test and improve what they had learned in theory: this is evident in the online teaching practice stage which was twice as long as the platform training stage.

### 4.2 The reflection component

Reflection formed the backbone of our model, and was designed into the training model at three levels: reflection on learning about online teaching knowledge and skills (Stage One), reflection on and observation of online teaching practices (Stage Two), and reflection posted in the Discussion Forum in 3C throughout the training. Reflection in Stage One was mainly conducted through reflection journals completed by the trainees immediately after the completion of each of the three workshops. The questions invited general feedback from the participants on how they felt about the way that the workshops were conducted: particular attention was directed towards their goals, and their reflections on their level of mastery of each function taught in the corresponding workshops.

In Stage Two each trainee conducted four rounds of online teaching and completed a self reflection report after each round. At the same time, trainees not teaching were required to observe their peers’ teaching and complete a monitoring report for each trainee teacher. Thus self reflection and observation constituted the main reflection mechanism in each round. We drew upon Schön’s (1987) concept of reflection in and on action, and encouraged the trainee teachers to complete their reports immediately after each round. In theory, for the four rounds of online teaching for each trainee, each should have completed 4 self-reflection reports and received 32 monitoring reports, with 28 being from the seven peers and four from the trainer.

The self-reflection report was constructed as a matrix with sections where participants could respond on all major elements of teaching. Appendix B is a self-reflection report completed by Cristina about her teaching on 10th January 2007. As illustrated in Appendix B, the reflection report not only allowed her to reflect on what she did or did not do well in the preparation and management of her online teaching, the last column- “improvement can be made” also provided her with a space to make notes to herself for improvement in the ensuing teaching round. Thus, in this column, she reminded herself to slow down and to ask the students to turn off the ‘repeat’ function in Window Media.
Player next time when she used the function of Joint Web Browsing. Such detailed and comprehensive reflection was evident in all self-reflection reports and depicted crucial learning phases in the trainees’ professional development. Appendix B also indicates how effectively the scaffolded reflection reports helped the trainee teachers to capture important elements in their teaching and reflect on the fine points in their teaching.

The Discussion Forum in 3C proved to be another important venue for reflection that was regularly used throughout the training. We encouraged the trainees to post their reflections and ideas in the Discussion Forum for everyone to see and discuss. The trainer and the technician checked the Forum at least once a day and answered the trainees’ questions in a timely fashion.

Among the 108 postings, 54% (58) of them were reflection on their learning experiences and online teaching in a broader theoretical spectrum in comparison with their self reflection reports. Appendix C presents three postings from the Forum, representing the trainees’ reflection at the beginning, the middle and the end of the training. As shown in Posting 3, upon the completion of the first workshop, Jill reflected upon her experience with much excitement and anticipation about the prospects of transforming from a classroom-based teacher to an e-teacher, using advanced technology to extend her teaching. When online teaching practice started, they reflected on the ways of what they had learned in the platform training stage was now being effectively applied to real online teaching, as in the case of Pat (Posting 61). Finally, immediately after completing her last teaching session, Cristina posted an extended and comprehensive reflection summarizing all aspects of her training experiences ranging from the technology, the pedagogy to psychological issues (see Posting 99). Appendix C indicates that the Discussion Forum provided a convenient venue for the trainees to reflect on each of the developmental stages that they went through during the training.

To summarize, reflection at various points of the training empowered the trainee teachers to evaluate their teaching and learning experiences in a cyclic and sustained manner. The cycle of practice, reflection and professional competence as advocated by Wallace (1991:49) became more evident in the four rounds of teaching and completing self reflection and monitoring reports in each round. These reports created opportunities for the trainees to constantly assess and evaluate what worked in their teaching, what did not work, what they should do to improve on what they had done and how certain tools could be used differently and more effectively. They were also able to see their own problems and responded to them accordingly, some through careful teaching design for the ensuing classes, others through more practice with certain online tools, either individually or with their peers. In addition, the Discussion Forum made it easier for the trainees to share their reflections whenever they wanted to. As a result of this progression, they were able to form new perspectives of not only their learning and e-learning as a whole, but also of themselves as an online teacher. It was also in this process did they become an active researcher, instead of a passive information receiver.

4.3 The collaboration component

The third important component of our training model is collaborative learning, which allowed the trainees to evaluate the model in a collective manner. It features open and professional dialogues among trainees, team teaching and peer monitoring.

Open and professional dialogues happened among the trainees throughout the training in the Discussion Forum in 3C. What was clearly conveyed in these dialogues were mutual support and encouragement, sharing of ideas and perceptions, and discussions of online teaching strategies. Appendix D provides some examples of the kinds of professional dialogues among the trainees.
Appendix E were required to observe and complete a monitoring report for the teacher observation and monitoring. Another especially appreciated term of class design as well as pedagogy among other things”. The second type of collaboration unique to our training model is team teaching. There were two major areas for collaboration in team teaching: content preparation and classroom management. In preparation for teaching, the team members often met in their own cyber face-to-face classrooms to discuss teaching plans and strategies such as how a listening and speaking activity should be conducted and what functions (e.g., Joint Web Browsing, the Poll and document sharing) should be employed to support what activities. They also rehearsed their teaching together in their cyber classrooms to help anticipate and solve any potential problems that might occur during online teaching. During their teaching in the main cyber face-to-face classroom, they often took turns to be in charge of the main teaching activities. It was usually the case that when one trainee was lecturing orally, the other would help to monitor the students’ video windows, answer questions in the text chat, type Chinese characters on the whiteboard, and control the use of functions such as the Joint Web Browsing and the Poll. If one teacher had to leave the main cyber classroom to supervise group work in the group cyber classrooms, the other teacher would keep the main classroom open for students to return after completing their group tasks.

When reflecting on her training experiences, Cristina wrote in the Discussion Forum on 2 February 2007: “Learning-wise, I found I learned most through the practice with peers, teaching preparation sessions with team members as well as the actual teaching process”. Jill confirmed this reflection in the final survey (QI-6) by saying that “the highlight [of her training experience] was the learning of team teaching techniques”.

QI-6 in the final survey asks if they enjoyed the help from their fellow trainees, the replies were unanimously positive. For Cristina, collaboration “provided a great opportunity to learn from others in terms of class design as well as pedagogy among other things”. The support from their peers was especially appreciated by Pat, who was quite nervous at the beginning. In the extended reflection that she wrote voluntarily upon the completion of the project, Pat emphasized:

But more importantly, I have met new colleagues and made new friends stemming from the project. Their encouragement, support and shared knowledge and skills are invaluable to me, in terms of consolidating the new techniques in online teaching. Without these friends I could have been lost long ago.

Another form of collaboration that was deliberately built into our training program is peer observation and monitoring. When one trainee or one team was teaching, the rest of the trainees were required to observe and complete a monitoring report for the teacher/team who taught. Appendix E is an example of the monitoring report. This report was completed by Annie, providing feedback for Pat’s and Jill’s team teaching in Lesson 5. The “Your say” column was responded by
Pat. As shown in Appendix E, Annie commented in detail on all aspects of teaching indicated in the report. These include preparation, management of the lesson (e.g., instruction/monitoring, use of time and use of tools), contents/resources, opportunities for interaction/participation and activities. She also made detailed comments in the “Other” section. In addition, specific suggestions for improvement were made constructively in the “Suggestion” column. In the “Your say” column, Pat responded positively to each of Annie’s comments and suggestions, promising to try out Annie’s suggestions in future lessons.

The monitoring report with its ‘Your say’ column proved to be a great venue for the trainees to engage in professional dialogues about specific aspects of online teaching, more attuned to individuals’ needs and concerns. As the monitoring reports were only sent to the trainee concerned and the trainer, the privacy of some comments was preserved. However, one drawback was that some great ideas and professional exchanges were not available to other trainees. This drawback was easily overcome by the trainer’s regular summarization of some good suggestions and ideas from the monitoring reports and posting of these suggestions and ideas in the Discussion Forum for the benefits of other trainees.

In summary, collaborative learning constituted another important dimension that we designed into our model to cater for the need of collective reflection and a supportive learning community. The above data indicates that team teaching should constitute an essential supporting mechanism in e-teacher training as peer encouragement and support, sharing ideas and knowledge, and learning from one another mean much more to teachers learning to teach synchronously online than to those learning to teach in traditional classrooms. Future research should investigate this form of training in more depth.

Our data also indicates that a supportive learning community was created through the Discussion Forum in 3C, in which reflection, perceptions and experiences were explored and shared, promoting a culture of shared learning and collective evaluation. The effective use of the Discussion Forum directed our attention to the importance of establishing a supportive and collegial environment through the built-in features (e.g., discussion forums and chat rooms); such features are available in most e-learning platforms (also see Clarke, 2009). More importantly, such a training environment lends itself to the development of the skills for facilitating student communication, interaction and collaboration, one of the seven dimensions of skills advocated by Hampel and Stickler. (see Hampel, 2009; Hample & Stickler, 2005; Stickler & Hampel, 2007).

5. Conclusion

Through discussing the development, implementation and evaluation of our e-teacher training model, this article has provided us with evidence of the essential elements that a holistic e-teaching training model should entail, that is, a two-stage practice design with teaching practice as its main stage, various forms of reflection built into every stage of the training, and different levels of collaboration among the trainees. What linked and run through all three components was the evaluation mechanisms built cyclically into every part of the model. Such continuous and cyclic evaluation allowed us to receive feedback in a timely fashion and adjust our training accordingly. Underlying this model is Loughran’s (2006: Preface) concept that a pedagogy for teacher education should allow “practice to push beyond the technical-rational, or tips-and-tricks approach, to teaching about teaching in a way that displays the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills of teaching itself”. In this sense, the proposed model is holistic in that it pushed the training process to go far beyond the transmission of strategies, knowledge and technology know-how, and nurtured the teacher’s identity formation and personal growth by adopting dynamic, supportive and evaluative build-in mechanisms.
that responded to the trainee teachers’ needs and concerns. Such a holistic model is especially crucial for e-teacher training as an e-learning environment often presents trainee teachers with new challenges and demands that they have not experienced in physical face-to-face teaching.

One limitation of the proposed model was its exclusion of the stage for modelling online teaching among the trainees themselves. Unfortunately, we did not have time for this stage in our program. Instead, we left this stage to the trainees themselves and most of them practiced their teaching before class with the trainer individually or their peers in the cyber face-to-face classrooms. Future research should include this stage between the platform training and teaching practice stage. During the modelling stage, practice teaching among the teachers themselves can be conducted and reflected upon.

We also recognize the small number of participating students in the study. This fact limited the opportunities for the trainee teachers to teach a large online class, which might present different kinds of challenges. Although this limitation did not affect the way we implemented and evaluated the proposed model, it would be ideal to evaluate the model with different class sizes.

The model explored in this study is only one of its kind. It is not the purpose of this article to establish a general model for e-teacher education. Rather, we hope this article unpacks what we experienced in developing, implementing and evaluating a model that goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills, and a model that responds to the needs and concerns of teachers in their endeavour to become a competent and confident online teacher. We also hope that this article encourages us to consider and reconsider the essence of e-teacher education in CALL.

Acknowledgement
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We wish to thank all the teachers participating in this research for their time, patience and valuable input. Without their participation and perseverance, this research would not have been possible. We also wish to acknowledge the timely technical support from Ming Huei Yang, who was always ready to help.
References


Figure Captions

Figure 1. Screen practice model of professional education/development (Wallace 1991:49)

Figure 2. An example of the cyber face-to-face classroom in 3C
### Table 1. Data collection methods and data collected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage One: Online Platform Training</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre-training survey (background information about the participants)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reflection journals on the platform training part of the project (Modules 1, 2 and 3)</td>
<td>21 (one survey for each of the three modules and 7 participants completed the surveys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Two: Online Teaching Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Self reflection reports: Each tutor who conducted an online class completed a self reflection report</td>
<td>26 reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Monitoring reports: Each tutor and the trainer completed a monitoring report for the tutor(s) who conducted the class each week</td>
<td>210 reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Throughout the training program</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussion Forum</td>
<td>108 postings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Final survey</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. The structure, contents and aims of the two-stage model used in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Main Contents</th>
<th>Aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage One: Platform training</strong> (4 weeks)</td>
<td>2 hours (Week 1)</td>
<td>Face-to-face workshop</td>
<td>1. General Introduction 2. Rapport building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 hours (Weeks 2 - 3)</td>
<td>3C online workshops</td>
<td>Introduction of 3C features/functions, classroom management skills and e-pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 week (Week 4)</td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td>Reflection and preparation for online teaching practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage Two: Online teaching</strong> (8 weeks)</td>
<td>4 weeks (weeks 5 - 8)</td>
<td>Individual teaching, peer observation and completion of monitoring and self-reflection reports</td>
<td>Skills application and development, and problem finding/solving in the cyber face-to-face classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>On-going workshop</td>
<td>Sharing online teaching experiences and discussing team teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 weeks (weeks 9 - 12)</td>
<td>Team teaching, peer observation and completion of monitoring and self-reflection reports</td>
<td>Development of team teaching and collaborative learning strategies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3. Replies to Q1-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>No. of Replies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 weeks of training and 9 weeks of practice teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 weeks of training and 8 weeks of practice teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 weeks of training and 7 weeks of practice teaching</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5 weeks of training and 6 weeks of practice teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other (please specify): 2 weeks training + 4-6 weeks practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stage 1  
(Pre-training)  
Stage 2  
(Professional education/development)  
GOAL

Trainee’s existing conceptual schemata or mental constructs  
Received Knowledge  
Practice  
Reflection  
Professional Competence  
Experiential Knowledge

‘Reflective cycle’

Figure 1. Reflective practice model of professional education/development (Wallace 1991:49)

The sub video windows  
The main video window  
The text chat  
The control panel  
The whiteboard

Figure 2. An example of the cyber face-to-face classroom in 3C
Appendices

Appendix A Part One of the final survey

**Part One: The E-tutor Training Program**
*(Please circle your answer for questions 1, 2 & 3)*

**QI-1.** Please rate the length of the entire training program from 1 to 5 (1 = too short and 5 = too long)  
1  2  3  4  5

**QI-2.** Please rate the amount of content of the training program ( 1 = too little and 5 = much)  
1  2  3  4  5

**QI-3.** In regard to the training schedule, I’d prefer  
(1) 2 weeks of training and 9 weeks of practice teaching  
(2) 3 weeks of training and 8 weeks of practice teaching*  
(3) 4 weeks of training and 7 weeks of practice teaching  
(4) 5 weeks of training and 6 weeks of practice teaching  
(5) Other (please specify)  
__________________________________________  
*This is the format we used for our training program

**QI-4.** Did you think face to face (as opposed to online) training is necessary? If yes, how much time should be allocated to such training?  

**QI-5.** How much time did you think would be appropriate for online training?  

**QI-6.** Please give feedback on your experience, by ticking any number of boxes. In addition, if you wish, you can give feedback in free format, e.g., to elaborate your answer(s) in the row next to the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I did not enjoy the training.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was very challenging.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was time consuming.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was time well spent.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed the help from other teachers.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it a rewarding experience.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have more confidence in online language teaching after the training</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learned a lot about online learning and teaching.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think online language learning will work.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed it.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I found it too hard for</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I feel more confident in using technology for teaching after the training.

I still prefer traditional classroom teaching to online teaching.

Other

**QI-7.** What impressed you most during the training?

**QI-8.** Please give any further advice or suggestions you have regarding how the whole training program should be improved

Appendix B Self reflection report by Cristina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>10/01/2007</th>
<th>Topic: hobbies (Listening)</th>
<th>Teaching time: 7:00-7:15pm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher(s):</td>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The objectives for this lesson</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty level</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>As far as Sue is concerned, a higher level of difficulty may be considerable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Thanks to the trainer’s advice during the rehearsal session, the amount was just about right.</td>
<td>As advised, it’s better to have a “B” plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The management</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Instruction of practice tasks was generally clear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of time</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>The teaching time was OK. However, the unfamiliarity with the functions in Control Panel caused chaos and wasted some time.</td>
<td>More to learn with the application with the functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The handling of technology</strong> (e.g. use of whiteboard, Poll, etc. Pls be specific)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom interaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-Student</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>As the trainer mentioned after the class, need to be more patient in terms of waiting for students’ response.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Student</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning activities</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for using Chinese</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Better than last time. But better to slow down a bit the speed of speech.</td>
<td>Try to slow down a bit next time but not too slow. ….</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom environment</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Other issues not mentioned above</td>
<td>Still only was able to concentrate on one area of the classroom, the one was in use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: S* = Satisfactory       US* = Unsatisfactory
Appendix C Postings from the Discussion Forum in 3C on reflection of the learning experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posting No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Posted by</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15 Nov 06</td>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>It's great to be able to participate in this training program. It's exciting to realize that my role as a teacher can be extended from traditional classrooms to a more accessible media, especially when thinking that I will be able to communicate with students while sitting in a comfortable chair at my own home with some good drink at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>13 Dec 06</td>
<td>Pat</td>
<td>It's so good to see all we've learnt are being used in this session, and how effective they were in Poll, in interaction with students and in Web browsing! It's well prepared by all involved and gave us more confidence after the first trial. well done! …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>1 February 07</td>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>… With regard to the technique, I found it was easy to learn the basics. However, it takes time to develop the competence of using the tools in a flexible, creative, and spontaneous way. … With regard to the teaching environment, … First, it limits student-student interaction… Second, it magnifies the impact of the differences in students’ language proficiency on teaching strategies as well as the pace of lectures. … With regard to psychological issues, I found carrying out the tutorials at home is more relaxing than in traditional classrooms. … However, small issues can dramatically increase the level of anxiety. … All in all, the training was a great learning experience for me. I enjoyed the whole process very much.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix D Examples of professional dialogues in the postings in the Discussion Forum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Posting No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Posted by</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>28 November 2006</td>
<td>Lonnie</td>
<td>According to my experience and observation, the initial sessions of distance learning are usually mixed with excitement, confusion and winding down. We may have a more objective feeling after 4-5 sessions. Let's wait and see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>29 November 2006</td>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>I totally agree! Even with traditional classroom teaching, the first one or two weeks can be tricky. But we just feel more confident of handling the problems occurred in traditional classroom environment. It seems more under control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>8 January 2007</td>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>… Firstly, from the students' point of view, I would say the text chat is most definitely necessary. … The text chat offers an unobtrusive means of doing this [allowing students to ask questions] without interrupting the flow of the lesson. … Also from the teacher's point of view, it is useful to be able to allow the assistant(s) to help out by answering questions in the text chat … Verdict: extremely useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>10 January 2007</td>
<td>Cristina</td>
<td>With the usefulness of text chat, I totally agree with Annie’s insightful discussion. My only concern is that, with the function of &quot;private chatting&quot;, how we ensure that students will not be over distracted by &quot;underground&quot; chatting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>13 January 2007</td>
<td>Annie</td>
<td>That’s a very good point, Cristina. … I wonder if it's possible to disable the &quot;private chatting&quot; function? (Do we really need it?) Or if it can't be disabled, is it possible for the teacher to check if individual are engaging in &quot;private chatting&quot;? …</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix E Monitoring report by Annie

**To:** Pat & Jill  
**From:** Annie  
**Teaching topic:** planning going out  
**Date:** 24/01/07  
**Copied to:** the trainer  
**Teaching time:** ___

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Great</th>
<th>O k</th>
<th>SI *</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Your say*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- thorough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction/ Monitoring</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good monitoring: Generally clear instructions; occasional confusion from Pat’s instructions; Jill’s voice much clearer than previous week</td>
<td>could try using ICQs (instruction comprehension questions) to check if students have understood instructions. …</td>
<td>Yes, I shall try it in the class, and to be clear in my instructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of tools</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of time</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pat showed good on-the-spot adjustment of original lesson plan to fit in with time ….</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content/Resources</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>suitable for teaching aims. Jill had great slides; very clear, easy to read, …</td>
<td>Yes, Jill has great skills in using tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction/ Participation</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Good to ask students to translate comprehension questions</td>
<td>Could ask students to read out comprehension questions on the whiteboard …</td>
<td>Good idea, to give student another chance to practise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Generally appropriate listening comprehension questions quite difficult for students to read and understand.</td>
<td>consider focus of activity, … maybe better to practise one skill at a time, …</td>
<td>Agree, for listening focus, the Qs should be simple and in English. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>√</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Both teachers provided great support of co-teacher in text chat: Pat very impressive (fast typing); vocab and grammar and translation; Jill good suggestions to Pat to adjust plan; …</td>
<td>Yes, I think we worked well as a team for the lesson, and learnt a lot from each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** SI* = suggesting improvement  
**Your say* is where the monitored teacher responds to the comments made by the observing teacher.